

Highlights of the School Libraries and Media Centers Survey

The following are highlights taken from the Statistical Analysis Report "School Library Media Centers: 1993-94" released in August 1998.

The current information revolution has been described as comparable to the industrial revolution in the 19th century in its impact on business and society. In this context, school libraries can have a strategic role in making information available to students, training students how to obtain and make use of information, and increasing the equity of students' access to and use of information. This report examines the current state of school libraries in the United States and how they have changed. The data taken from the 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) are compared with historical data from previous surveys. The major results appear below.

- Library media centers are now almost universally available. In 1993-94, 96 percent of all public schools and 80 percent of all private schools had library media centers. This compares with 50 percent of the public schools in 1950, and 44 percent of private schools in 1962.
- Out of 164,650 school library staff, 44 percent were state-certified library media specialists, 20 percent were other non-certified professional librarians, and 36 percent were other staff.
- Library media centers spent about \$828 million in 1992-93, including federal gifts and grants but not including salaries and wages. For public schools, after adjusting for differences between the two surveys, expenditures were \$676 million (in 1993 dollars) in 1985 and \$738 million in 1992-93. Private school expenditures were \$61 million (in 1993 dollars) in 1985 and \$89 million in 1993. School libraries had 879 million book volumes in their collections at the end of the 1992-93 school year, or a mean of 28.0 books per student. They also had 2.6 million serial subscriptions, 13.3 million tape and disk video materials, 42.5 million other audiovisual materials, 5.4 million microcomputer software items, and 314,000 CD-ROMs. For public schools, the mean number of books per pupil was 5.3 in 1958 and 17.8 in 1993.
- Two-thirds (67 percent) of schools with library media centers had at least one microcomputer that was supervised by library media center staff. Among those centers with staff-supervised computers, the mean number of computers was 8.9. Other equipment and services found at library media centers included a telephone (57 percent), one or more CD-ROMs for such uses as periodical indices and encyclopedias (41 percent), an automated circulation system (32 percent), a computer with modem (31 percent), database searching with CD-ROM (28 percent), one or more video laser disks (27 percent), an automated catalogue (21 percent), a connection to the Internet (11 percent), and online database searching (9 percent).
- The total number of students using school library media centers per week was 42.5 million in 1985 and 32.5 million in 1993-94 in public schools, and 5.3 million in 1985 and 3.4 million in 1993-94 in private schools. Over the same time period, total enrollment in public schools increased from 39.4 million to 43.5 million. The mean weekly circulation per pupil per school was 1.2 in 1985 and 1.3 in 1993-94 in public schools, and 0.9 in 1985 and 1.2 in 1993-94 in private schools.
- About two-thirds (65 percent) of school head librarians were regular full-time employees at the schools in which they were surveyed, while 19 percent provided library services at more than one school, and 16 percent were employed part time.
- About half (52 percent) of school head librarians reported they earned a master's degree as their highest degree, while another 8 percent reported training beyond the master's level, either as an education specialist (7 percent) or with a doctorate or first-professional degree (1 percent).
- Head librarians generally expressed positive attitudes towards their schools, the library media centers, and their own personal roles. For example, 96 percent said students believed the library media center was a desirable place to be, 95 percent said their jobs as librarians had more advantages than disadvantages, and 89 percent said the school administration's behavior toward the library media center was supportive and encouraging.
- The median base salary of school head librarians was \$30,536 during the 1993-94 academic year, and their median annual earnings from all sources was \$32,000.
- In 1993, public school districts employed 51,000 full-time-equivalent (FTE) school librarians, while another 800 FTE positions were either vacant or temporarily filled by a substitute. About 150 FTE positions were abolished or withdrawn because a suitable candidate could not be found, and 450 FTE positions were lost through layoffs the end of the last school year.